

Important Advances in Clinical Medicine

Epitomes of Progress— Preventive Medicine and Public Health

The Scientific Board of the California Medical Association presents the following inventory of items of progress in Preventive Medicine and Public Health. Each item, in the judgment of a panel of knowledgeable physicians, has recently become reasonably firmly established, both as to scientific fact and important clinical significance. The items are presented in simple epitome and an authoritative reference, both to the item itself and to the subject as a whole, is generally given for those who may be unfamiliar with a particular item. The purpose is to assist the busy practitioner, student, research worker or scholar to stay abreast of these items of progress in Preventive Medicine and Public Health which have recently achieved a substantial degree of authoritative acceptance, whether in his own field of special interest or another.

The items of progress listed below were selected by the Advisory Panel to the Section on Preventive Medicine and Public Health of the California Medical Association and the summaries were prepared under its direction.

Reprint requests to: Division of Scientific and Educational Activities,
California Medical Association, 731 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94103

Resurgence of Lice and Scabies

EVEN THOUGH ectoparasitic infestations are not reportable diseases, public health departments in the past few years have been made aware that both scabies and lice are again appearing in epidemic proportions in the population. Statistics are inaccurate, but those outbreaks that are reported via schools and public health clinics indicate a need for control measures.

Control measures for ectoparasitic infestations, scabies and lice, consist of education, treatment and prevention. Therefore, when a primary case of either disease is diagnosed, not only should the patient be treated but a short explanation of how scabies and lice are transmitted and spread should follow.

At present, the preferred and most common

method of treatment is use of some form of the pesticide gamma benzene hexachloride. For use on humans, this is a prescription item and can be purchased as Kwell® cream, shampoo or lotion. Lindane, its over-the-counter disinfectant form (formerly available as a powder or lotion), can be purchased as an aerosol spray, Linofly®. Use of this form in treatment is effective since it kills both the adult parasites and their ova (nits of lice). In treating the patient, one must use effective therapy against the parasites both on the human as well as on their fomites.

Several useful medications for treating ectoparasites can be purchased over-the-counter.

- Sulphur ointment, B.P. (10 percent sulfur)—can also be used in a vanishing cream base. Marketed sulfur soaps have little effect.

- Dimethyl-diphenylene disulphide (dimethyl-